



# Streetscapes





# Executive Summary

Although currently dominated by the automobile, South Lake Union has great potential to enhance its appeal to pedestrians. Focusing on the pedestrian has the potential to attract new business, tourism, and residents, while enhancing the neighborhood character for current residents and businesses. With close proximity to Seattle Center, Downtown Seattle, Capitol Hill, and Queen Anne, South Lake Union is in an optimal position to emerge as a neighborhood for the pedestrian. Combined with the large investments planned for the area, a focus on walkability and human-scaled urban form will ensure the vitality of this neighborhood for several generations.

Fostering a vibrant pedestrian neighborhood requires investment in the pedestrian environment. The purpose of this paper was to look into ways of enhancing the streetscape and public spaces in order to transform South Lake Union into a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. Much legwork has already been done in this regard, although it exists in small pockets of information scattered throughout several documents. These documents have been summarized for the reader's convenience later in this paper. Local, regional, and national case studies were also consulted for transferable ideas.

After consulting these existing sources and undertaking primary research through fieldwork, prioritized pedestrian corridors were identified and depicted in graphic form via GIS-based maps. The most prominent corridor identified was the East-West connection of Thomas Street, which would facilitate connectivity through identified nodes and gateways within and to the neighborhood. Remediation measures were also proposed for Denny Park, a valuable swatch of open space that has a rich heritage but is currently underutilized as an urban park. It was concluded that injecting recreational uses into the Park was the most immediate way to improve its function as open space.

It is hoped that this section will serve as the starting point for renewed community discussions about improving pedestrian mobility within South Lake Union.

## Purpose

The purpose of this section is to look into ways of enhancing the streetscape and public spaces in order to transform South Lake Union into a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. This goal is in line with the desires expressed by several stakeholders

within the neighborhood, including SLUFAN, the Cascade Neighborhood Council, the City of Seattle Parks Department, Mayor Greg Nickels, Vulcan Real Estate, and the City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development.

## Methods and Processes

Several principles from classic planning texts were critical in informing our work and guiding our ideas. These principles have been summarized in Appendix A and were pulled from the following books:

*The Death and the Life of Great American Cities*, by Jane Jacobs

Jacobs writes about what makes streets safe or unsafe; about what constitutes a neighborhood and what function it serves within the larger organism of the city; and about why some neighborhoods remain impoverished while others regenerate themselves. Key to the importance of her work was Jacobs' reliance on empirical research and observation. She outlines four necessary generators of city diversity, the curse of border vacuums, and provides the ingredients of what makes for successful open space.

*A Pattern Language*, by Christopher Alexander

This book offers a practical language for building and planning. The reader is given an overview of some 250 patterns that are the units of this language, each consisting of a design problem, discussion, illustration, and solution. By understanding recurrent design problems in their environment, readers can identify patterns in their own design projects and use these patterns to create a language of their own.

*The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, by William Whyte

This book is based on observations made about Manhattan open spaces between 1970-1980 from Whyte's Street Life Project. Since 1961, NYC had been giving incentive bonuses to builders who provided plazas. Some plazas, such as the one in front of the Seagram's Building, were well-used, while others were not. The goal was to find out what made for popular open space, and to use these findings to update the zoning ordinance.

After reviewing these texts, the next step was to understand the goals and desires for the neighborhood as they relate to the pedestrian environment. This required a thorough review of plans for the study area: the South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan, the South Lake Union Design Guidelines, the South Lake





Union Transportation Plan, the Seattle Parks Department's North Downtown Parks Plan, the Terry Avenue North Street Design Guidelines, the West Lake Union Improvement Project, and the Mercer Corridor Project. The City of Seattle's website was also reviewed regularly, particularly the Parks Department webpage and Mayor Nickel's webpage on South Lake Union.

After summarizing and synthesizing these documents, case studies of streetscape and open space improvements within Seattle were reviewed for transferable ideas. These included Vine Street, SEA Streets, High Point Project, the Denny Triangle Green Street Plan, the Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan, and the policies spelled out in the DCLU Director's Rule 11-93. Regional and national examples were also consulted for useful suggestions and were selected according to the following criteria: (1) cost-effectiveness, (2) sustainable features, and (3) location commonalities with South Lake Union (i.e. size, form, natural features). Lessons learned and the key elements of these implementation strategies were then summarized and were relied on in the creation of maps and illustrations.

Site reconnaissance was undertaken on multiple occasions to assess existing street and sidewalk conditions, to map out critical nodes, and to understand how users interacted with Denny Park.

At the conclusion of this research process, pedestrian corridors in South Lake Union were identified and depicted in graphic form via GIS-based maps. Suggestions for how to make Denny Park a more successful open space and connect it to the neighborhood were also developed.

## Background Research

### Review of South Lake Union-related plans

#### South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

The South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan, created in 1998, signifies the vision for the neighborhood established by its stakeholders at that time. With regard to pedestrian oriented policies, it calls for an active reconsideration of pedestrian conditions. The plan specifically highlights the need for improvement of the streetscape on Mercer and Valley Streets, among others. The importance of pedestrian connections is also demonstrated by a desire to enhance pedestrian bridges/underpasses and improve at-grade crossings.

With regard to open space, the plan sets a goal of one acre of open space for every 100 residents. This would be met through pocket parks, accessible rooftops, and designation of certain corridors as green streets. Density bonuses are mentioned as a method to help promote more open space by way of pocket parks. It is also recommended that the Park Administrative Offices that are currently located in Denny Park be relocated and the building possibly be re-used as a Community Center.

#### South Lake Union Transportation Study

The South Lake Union Transportation Study, created in 2004, goes beyond the Neighborhood Plan in calling for pedestrian improvements. Spelled out in the plan is the goal to improve safety for all transportation modes by providing safe pedestrian crossings and good access to transit. Through an improved streetscape design, a safe and active pedestrian environment, and improved non-motorized access to South Lake Union Park, the study anticipates increased economic vitality, neighborhood livability, sustainable development, and an enhanced quality of life. The study highlights neighborhood segments with a poor level of service and poor pedestrian accessibility. In particular, it references blocks where there are no sidewalks or the sidewalks are in inadequate condition. Lastly, the plan points to the dearth of landscaping on high volume streets.

#### South Lake Union Design Guidelines

The ideas generated in the South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan and Transportation Study were expanded upon in creating the South Lake Union Design Guidelines. This document calls for creation of gateways and use of such tools as streetscaping, landscaping, artwork, and signage. The gateways include the intersections of:

- Westlake Avenue North & Denny Way
- Westlake Avenue North & 9th Avenue North
- Dexter Avenue North & Mercer Street
- Fairview Avenue North & Valley Street
- Fairview Avenue North & Denny Way
- Fairview Avenue North & Mercer Street

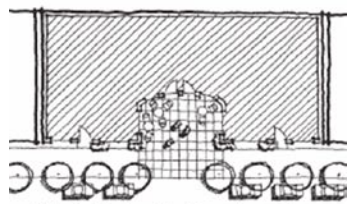
In addition, the Plan identifies centers of activity, referred to as "Heart Locations," defined as:

- Cascade Park
- South Lake Union Park
- Denny Park

- Harrison Street
- Terry Avenue North
- Westlake Avenue North

The identification of gateways and centers of activity is further expanded upon in maps at the end of this section. While the Neighborhood Plan and Transportation Study called for general pedestrian improvements, the Guidelines call for particular improvements including: pedestrian lighting, public art, special paving, landscaping, and additional public space provided by curb bulbs and entry plazas. In addition to streetscape improvements sought through public/private partnerships, the plan speaks of the desire to involve the private sector in enhancing the pedestrian environment via configuration of retail space to spill out onto the sidewalk where applicable.

This idea of blending the public and private space involves designing the entries of residential buildings to enhance the character of the streetscape with the possible use of elements such as small gardens and stoops to create a transition between the spaces.



(Source: *South Lake Union Design Guidelines*, p. 9)

Like the Transportation Study, the Design Guidelines also call for flexibility in development in exchange for not only open space, but also for things like curb bulbs, street furniture, water features, and landscaping that meets Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) criteria.

### Terry Avenue North Street Design Guidelines

The Terry Avenue North Street Design Guidelines, completed in 2005, speak to the opportunity of creating a streetscape where pedestrians have priority over automobiles. The Terry Avenue Guidelines are intended to supplement the South Lake Union Guidelines. They refer to Terry Avenue's definition in the South Lake Union Design Guidelines as a Heart Location. Additionally, the guidelines note sustainability as an important value in South Lake Union.

The initial idea for Terry Avenue North was to borrow from the Dutch woonerf street design and blend the sidewalk and street, but it was concluded to be infeasible due to regulatory constraints. Goals outlined in the design guidelines included promotion of pedestrian mobility and reduced vehicular speed, treating the sidewalk and roadway with similar paving, using sustainable materials,

emphasis of safe interaction between transit modes, using topography to drain surface stormwater, reduction of impervious surfaces, and choosing landscaping compatible with Seattle's climate. The Guideline recommends specific types of materials and treatments related to brick pavers, bollards, pedestrian-scale lighting, and trees. This document also references integration of the future streetcar into the design of Terry Avenue North, which will run south along the street between Valley Street and John Street.

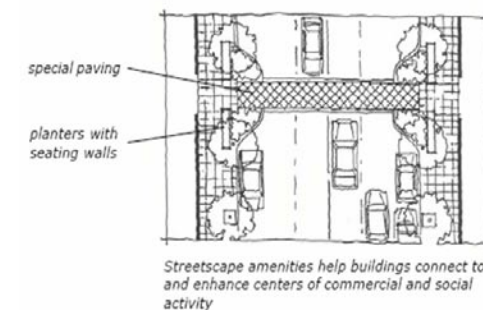
## Review of Seattle-related plans

### Denny Triangle Neighborhood Green Street Guidelines

The Denny Triangle Neighborhood Green Street Guidelines, developed in 2001, bear relevance to South Lake Union, as the two are adjacent neighborhoods. Like South Lake Union, Denny Triangle is experiencing growth that will place further demands on open space and pedestrian circulation. The Guidelines call for a variety of open spaces that are to be connected through a pedestrian network. These open spaces are to provide exposure to the sun and ample seating. The Guidelines also outline different treatments for transit, mixed-use, and residential districts.

### Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan, Design Guidelines, 2001

Similar to the plans for South Lake Union, the Ballard Master Plan emphasizes the importance of walking as a transit mode. Two primary tools for doing so are mid-block crossings and streetscape continuity, which are ideas particularly relevant to South Lake Union.



(Source: *South Lake Union Design Guidelines*, p. 18)

The intent of the guidelines, similar to those for South Lake Union, is to provide the right balance between rigidity and flexibility to future developers working in the neighborhood. Many of the ideas in the Plan have been carried out, thus providing a great example of what can be done with a successful plan and vision. South Lake Union can take a page from the Ballard Neighborhood's community-wide

collaboration efforts, which can serve to achieve community buy-in regarding streetscape improvements.

#### Vine Street, Growing Vine Street Revisited, 2004

This guidebook summarizes the history of greening Vine Street and offer direction on where Vine Street is headed in the future. The main idea behind greening Vine Street was to add open space and create a street park in an urban setting. A major bonus was the recycling of stormwater to use in irrigating the Belltown P-Patch.

This is directly applicable to the identified South Lake Union goal of finding unique ways to meet the need for open space within the neighborhood. One of the simplest treatments in the guidebook, which has great potential for use in South Lake Union, is the use of portable plantings. The idea is that while awaiting street improvements, portable planter boxes could be used. In addition, the idea of linking green streets with alleys is brought up in this report, something that other guidelines and reports had not introduced. Like the Terry Avenue Guidelines, this guidebook includes a detailed index of plants that should be used. In addition, the guidebook is rich with renderings that give a clear idea of what Vine Street will look like at full build out. It also speaks of the dependency on grants and on property owners for funding to carry out the project. A problem that is brought up in this guide and several other reports is the lack of agency guidance in developing green street parks, which should be an important consideration as progress is made in South Lake Union.

#### Street Edge Alternative (SEA Street) Project

The SEA Street project was undertaken by Seattle Public Utilities in a North Seattle neighborhood near Carkeek Park. The goal of the project was to reduce impervious surfaces to 11% less than a traditional street and provide surface water detention in swales. The re-design of the right of ways turned once linear streets into meandering ones that help to slow traffic. Two years of monitoring show SEA Street has reduced stormwater volume leaving the project area by 98%. Additionally, cost data provided by Caitlin Evans of Seattle Public Utilities shows that while development of the initial pilot project exceeded that of a traditional street design, subsequent projects have come in at 70% of the cost of a typical street design. Having the sidewalks flush with the road allows the narrower-than-average streets to accommodate large service trucks or emergency vehicles. The plantings were installed by Seattle Public Utilities. Residents are responsible for maintenance. While this project was implemented in a suburban environment, elements could be borrowed and would relate to the idea of reducing storm water runoff that appears in some of the previously reviewed plans. This project has the greatest applicability for non-arterial and low-volume streets. While the level of treatment undertaken at SEA Street may not be a priority for South Lake Union because of the minimal runoff that makes it directly into Lake Union untreated,

technologies that can slow water down before it enters the pipe system are very appropriate for the study area.

#### High Point Project

The High Point Project is a partnership between Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle Housing Authority to integrate a natural drainage system in a mixed-income housing redevelopment. Useful for application in South Lake Union are the use of swales within the planting strips of the street right-of-way, which are used both to filter water and to provide a buffer of green for pedestrians.

#### DCLU Director's Rule 11-93

The Director's Rule 11-93 established the Green Streets Design Guidelines and Implementation Process. Although Seattle is de-emphasizing and plans to eventually phase out the term 'green streets,' the Director's Rule 11-93 provides information that is still relevant and useful in South Lake Union. The Rule establishes the definition of green streets as is used today, but without the focus on sustainability that has recently been applied to the term. Four different types of green streets are established. Green Street- Type 1 prohibits traffic, while Type 2 and 3 provide for different levels of traffic. Type 4 provides for limited or no traffic. The guideline itself does not provide for any specific treatments, just general directives. The most important aspect of the Director's Rule is its detail of the complex permitting process for green streets. Still, little guidance is given, and it is evident in green street plans throughout the city that a clear plan does not exist, as the definition of green streets varies, and is often used interchangeably with the term 'pedestrian oriented streetscape' in proposals.

#### Potlatch Trail, Proposed 2001 (aka Bay to Lake Trail)

The Potlatch Trail plan emphasizes pedestrian and bicycle mobility in conjunction with a vibrant streetscape. Based upon the desire to restore the route used by Native Americans in the 1800's, the trail would connect Elliott Bay with South Lake Union Park. The plan also includes the idea of integrating adjacent P-patches. In exchange for density bonuses and other incentives, developers are called on to include unique lighting, paving and seating. The ideas expressed in the Potlatch trail are directly applicable because part of the trail connects to South Lake Union. In addition, many of the ideas in the plan are useful for planning connections between open space and the continuity of streetscape design.



### West Lake Union Improvement Project

This project began in early 2002 and has reached its final stages. Generally, the project addresses drainage, street, parking and power distribution improvements along Westlake Avenue North between the Fremont Bridge and the south end of Lake Union. Although the project does not extend into SLU, it recommends extending the project's vision into SLU. The proposed addition of a streetcar on Westlake Avenue would be appropriately complemented by the street design continuity of the West Lake Union Improvement Project.

## Case Studies

### Charlottesville, Virginia

Charlottesville, Virginia, presents a vital lesson in streetscape improvements. After undertaking significant streetscape improvements, including a pedestrian-only mall, anticipated increases in street activity, consumer spending, and overall economic performance failed to materialize:

“The connecting cross-streets that link Main Street to adjacent Water and Market streets are a pedestrian dead zone, and prevent the energy of the Main Street from spreading to these parallel routes...The City is apparently considering re-opening and re-developing some of the side streets...This could be positive step

in encouraging businesses to locate on these streets, while still protecting the pedestrian character of [Main Street], itself.”



*Charlottesville uses directional signage for businesses located on nearby cross-streets adjacent to the Main*

To borrow from this experience, the development of isolated, unconnected pedestrian corridors in South Lake Union is not recommended. Rather, a grid of pedestrian corridors is necessary to establish a vibrant pedestrian community.

### Boston, Massachusetts

Boston sought to encourage transportation alternatives through a Guaranteed Ride Home Program. Employers provide free rides in an emergency to all employees who typically take alternative modes of transport. Boston also worked to improve its pedestrian atmosphere by burying utilities, instituting new

development requirements for bike racks and mandating a minimum percentage for fenestration of street level facades.

### Cleveland, Ohio

Cleveland orchestrated a connectivity improvement program to connect its waterfront with the surrounding neighborhoods. This allowed for a walking path to be constructed around the inner harbor and offer space for family-oriented concerts and other activities. Cleveland also developed a policy to encourage short trips to the downtown lakefront by providing on-street parking.

Of particular relevance to South Lake Union, Cleveland mandated that the streetlight illumination supplied by the public utility companies be limited to two designs. This effort

to provide visual continuity was designed to enhance the downtown streetscape. Guiding the design selection, it was desired that this lighting system emphasize Cleveland's strengths as a cultural center while honoring its architecture, history, art and design. It was expressed that materials for walkways also be of a design and scale compatible with the surrounding buildings and streetscapes.



*Cleveland's waterfront allows connections to surrounding neighborhoods*



In South Lake Union, specializing lighting has already been designated for Terry Avenue North and is currently in use along the streetscape frontage of the Rosetta Building. To provide visual continuity, this lighting treatment should be extended along the Thomas Street East-West Corridor (this corridor is further outlined in the Analysis and Remediation portion of this section).

### Hickory, North Carolina

Hickory sought to encourage private streetscape improvements throughout its urban core. The planning department developed a policy where it would pay for planting of street trees and/or installation of pedestrian-friendly street lights in the public streetscape corridor in exchange for property owners agreeing to install landscape improvements on adjoining private property. At the same time, they implemented a policy of eliminating surplus driveway aprons and curb cuts in exchange for private landscape improvements, which also increased the available on street parking for customers of local business owners. Lastly, Hickory explored the feasibility of installing brick crosswalks, improved sidewalks, and other pedestrian improvements in exchange for private sector guarantees of investment.

### Kitchener, California

The Kitchener Planning Department reduced minimum front yard setbacks in an effort to foster a friendly pedestrian atmosphere. They also specified that retail have display windows on the street-front façade, and implemented a fenestration requirement similar to Boston's. At the same time, they sought to preserve the solar access envelope by requiring tall buildings to incorporate setbacks such that the shadow effect would be avoided. To provide a proper sense of enclosure, their code specifies that buildings in the urban core be a minimum of four stories. Lastly, Kitchener limited the allowed off-street parking for new developments in pedestrian corridors in an effort to limit the vehicular dominance in those areas.



*Example of walkways made of materials compatible with surrounding buildings*

### Portland, Oregon

Portland has undertaken a sincere attempt to improve its pedestrian atmosphere. Upon review, new development can be required to provide new street construction, frontage improvements, sidewalks, streetlights, traffic signals, and signing pavement markings.

Portland also has an active policy to encourage green streets. It has attempted to define a holistic approach to green streets, recognizing that “ecological health (is) found in an integrated approach to urban development acknowledging needs for a healthy habitat for humans and other species, and the requirements of modern

urban living.” To strive towards these goals, the City has laid out a comprehensive definition of green streets as streets that:

- integrate a stormwater management system within the street right-of-way,
- reduce the amount of stormwater runoff,
- are visible elements of the “green infrastructure” system,
- use trees for stormwater and temperature mitigation,
- ensure street has least impact on surroundings, especially at locations where it crosses a stream or other sensitive area, and
- require a more broad-based alliance for its planning, funding, maintenance and monitoring.

Seeking to develop streets more sustainably, the City has recently received grant money to develop a number of pilot projects. In one such development, Portland is looking to reengineer and undertake a “green street rebuild” on a street that is currently an asphalt-paved road with no sidewalks or bike lanes. The hope for this street is that it will be redeveloped with numerous sustainable street design features.

### Vancouver, British Columbia

To increase the amount of streets that embrace sustainability principles and improve water tables, Vancouver promotes reduction of curbs and gutters. This permits more rain water to drain into the ground and allows the water tables to recharge, which in turn increases creek flows and enhances fish habitat.

Vancouver also promotes street beautification through the street gardens sponsorship program. Citizens or agencies sponsor and maintain street gardens in traffic circles and corner bulges. Individuals or groups can select and maintain plants. Thus, traffic calming measures foster community identity while improving pedestrian safety.

To reduce the amount of asphalt and impervious surface in alleyways, South Lake Union could borrow from Vancouver's Country Lanes Program, which is a sustainable alternative to regular lane paving in alleys. As their name suggests, Country Lanes are structured like two wheel ruts in old country roads. They feature two narrow driving strips and a structural component with grass. The City has now developed three of these two-wheel paths and reports them well suited for residential lanes and back alleys. The Lanes are designed to provide maximum area for rainwater absorption while still providing a usable driving surface.

An additional element that has proven useful in Vancouver's efforts to develop



country lanes is “structural soil.” This product, developed by Vancouver’s engineering department, is a new soil that is a mixture of gravel and soil/compost. It will allow plants to grow, but was designed to handle heavy loads such that it will not settle under the weight of cars and trucks.



*Country Lane in Vancouver*

Similar to the opportunity presented by the potential redevelopment of South Lake Union, Vancouver chose to redevelop its downtown in a way that promoted mixed-income development. Very little of this development was subsidized. Instead, growth was expected to help pay for growth. Furthermore, Vancouver required developers of the megaprojects to provide a variety of public goods, including many elements of sustainable street design such as

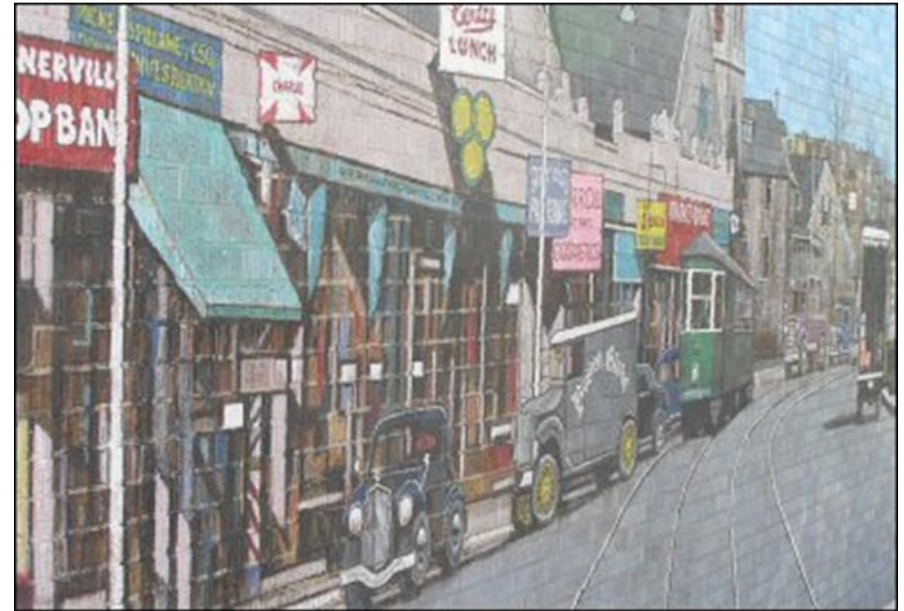
waterfront walkways, parks, marinas, and other public amenities. As Gordon Price, former Vancouver city councilor noted, “All this makes the developer’s product attractive. Public benefit, in short, adds private value.”

#### Other

In an effort to improve the pedestrian streetscape, several cities within Washington, such as Olympia, Des Moines, and Bellingham have implemented community art programs to eliminate blank walls. These same cities have undertaken the added cost of pervious concrete (estimated at \$6-\$9/square foot) that allows water to pass through the material to a gravel layer underneath.



*Beautified traffic circle, maintained by local residents*

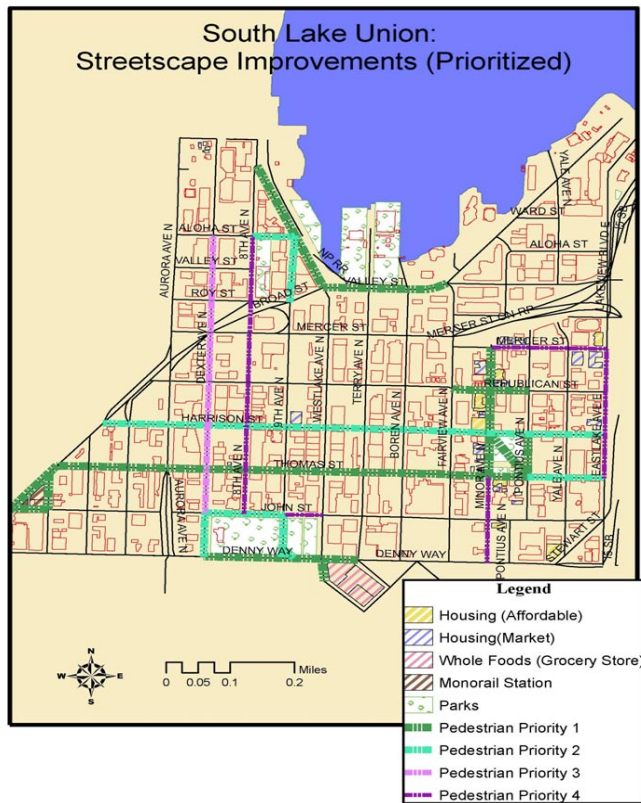


*Using Art to eliminate blank walls*

## Analysis and Remediation

### Pedestrian Corridor Identification Methodology

The purpose of identifying pedestrian corridors is to connect important nodes of activity along the most logical route, thereby fostering pedestrian activities and making SLU a pleasant place to work, visit and live. All recommendations are depicted on the Streetscape Improvements Map.



Source: Source: University of Washington, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Department of Urban Design and Planning, South Lake Union Studio, Spring 2005

Several of the aforementioned mentioned documents that deal with South Lake Union note the importance of pedestrian corridors and identify where they should be placed. For convenience, these documents have again been referenced below:

#### Designated & Proposed Green Street Improvements (Parks Department)

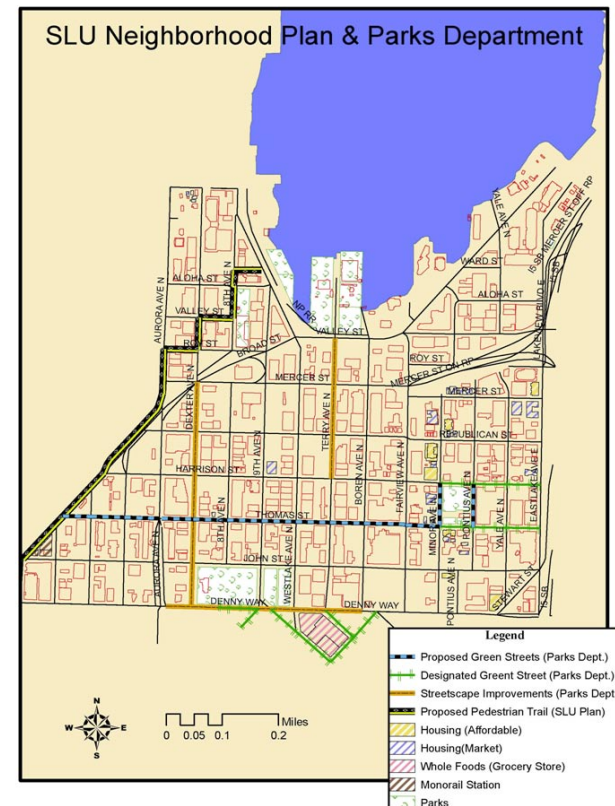
Specific streets are identified as Green Streets. These streets are identified as corridors appropriate for landscaping and open space enhancements (Map: SLU Neighborhood Plan & Parks Department, same as Map 4 at end of this section).

#### Street Improvements (Parks Department)

Specific streets are identified as in need of improvements. These streets are identified as corridors appropriate for general street enhancements (Map: SLU Neighborhood Plan & Parks Department, same as Map 4 at end of this section).

#### Proposed Pedestrian Trail (Parks Department)

The plan identifies pedestrian trails that would foster open space (Map: SLU Neighborhood Plan & Parks Department, same as Map 4 at end of this section).



Source: University of Washington, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Department of Urban Design and Planning, South Lake Union Studio, Spring 2005





### Heart Locations (SLU Design Guidelines)

“Heart locations serve as the perceived center of commercial and social activity within the neighborhood,” (South Lake Union Design Guidelines 2003). These areas were considered in the prioritization process (Map: SLU Design Guidelines, same as Map 2 at the end of this section).

### Gateway Locations (SLU Design Guidelines)

“[Gateway locations] are sites that create opportunities for identification, a physical marker for the community to notice they are entering a special place. Methods to establish gateways should consider the site’s characteristics such as

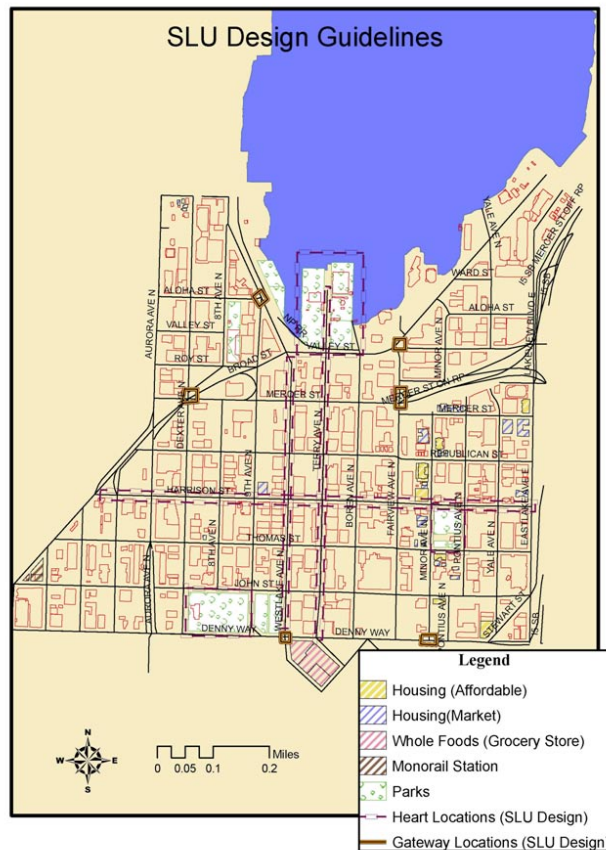
topography, views or surrounding building patterns,” (South lake Union Design Guidelines 2003). These areas were considered in the prioritization process (Map: SLU Design Guidelines, same as Map 2 at the end of this section).

### Bicycle Lanes

An existing bicycle lane (Dexter Avenue) was considered in the prioritization process (Map: Existing and Developing Plans, same as Map 3 at end of this section).

### Other Streets

Corridors that the City of Seattle has already created plans for were not considered



Source: University of Washington, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Department of Urban Design and Planning, South Lake Union Studio, Spring 2005



Source: University of Washington, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Department of Urban Design and Planning, South Lake Union Studio, Spring 2005



in the prioritization process. These include the Westlake Avenue [West Lake Union Improvement Plan], Mercer Street, Valley Street, and Broad Streets [Mercer Street Corridor Project]. See Map of Existing and Developing Plans, same as Map 3 at end of this section, for locations of these existing street projects.

## Locations – Nodes of activity

Nodes of activity played an important part in determining pedestrian corridors needing improvements. The following are the principal nodes identified by this report: the proposed monorail stop, parks, existing housing, commercial uses, grocery stores (Whole Foods), and the waterfront. Additionally, the Charlottesville, Virginia reference demonstrates the need to coordinate improvements along adjacent corridors to avoid isolating the neighborhood's corridors. Although different levels of improvement are needed, the entire neighborhood must undergo improvements to avoid depriving any areas of pedestrian usage.

## Priority Levels

### Pedestrian Priority 1

Streets in this category are determined to receive immediate attention. Additionally, these streets should receive the highest level of street improvements in the neighborhood. The streets were chosen based on the criteria above; thus, high levels of pedestrian use are anticipated.



*Sketch of Priority 1 treatment level*

Street improvements include: landscaping (i.e. trees, planting strips, etc.), bio-retention swales, trash/recycle bins, pedestrian-level lighting, street furniture (i.e. bicycle racks, benches, etc.), brick mid-block and corner crossings, traffic calming devices (i.e. roundabout), brick accented sidewalks, no off-street parking.

### *Thomas Street*

Thomas Street is the primary East-West Corridor in South Lake Union. It allows high density of housing on the eastern part of the neighborhood to be connected to the proposed monorail station. Additionally, Thomas should be connected to the existing housing units along Minor Avenue. Pontius Avenue, Minor Avenue and Republican Street provide this connection. Also, improvements to the pathway through Cascade Park should compliment the proposed pedestrian



*Looking East on Thomas from John*

connections. This will also contribute to usage and safety in the park. Additionally, a pedestrian pathway across Aurora Avenue is proposed in this study (see Wayfinding/Connectivity section).

The Parks Department has also identified Thomas Street as a 'Proposed Green Street' and has slated it for 'Streetscape Improvements' (see Map 4: SLU Neighborhood Plan and Parks Department). Finally, the proposed streetcar route will run along Thomas between Terry Avenue and Westlake Avenue, contributing to the importance of the corridor.



*Looking West along Thomas at Fairview*



### *Denny Way*

Denny Way divides South Lake Union from the Denny Triangle. However, connectivity between nodes requires bridging this gap so people can easily access the grocery store (Whole Foods). Additionally, the proposed street improvements would increase park usage, as well as slow motorized traffic near the park.. The proposed streetcar route will run along Westlake Avenue; the addition of this transit mode will heighten the importance of pedestrian mobility in this area. This will affect pedestrian usage at the Denny-Westlake intersection. Pedestrian usage will be reduced if pedestrian oriented street improvements are not implemented. This is also consistent with remediation measures for a pedestrian bridge proposed in the Wayfinding and Connectivity section.



*Looking SE at intersection of Denny and Westlake*

Finally, the Parks Department identified this portion as a 'Designated Green Street.' Coupled with the SLU Design Guideline's identification of the Denny - Westlake intersection as a 'Gateway' to the neighborhood, Denny Way merits strong consideration.

### *Valley Street*

Although Valley Street's future will likely be decided by the Mercer Corridor Project, this study aims to reinforce the need to make Valley Street a pedestrian corridor. The waterfront is a critical natural resource to the neighborhood. Promoting easy pedestrian access to and from the waterfront will enhance the neighborhood's identity. Furthermore, the Cleveland case study shows that a successful waterfront encourages investment in the neighborhood. The success of events such as the Cingular Summer Nights at South Lake Union will depend on accessibility to the waterfront.

The South Lake Union Design Guidelines further encourage Valley Street's development with 'Gateway' designations at the Fairview-Valley and Aloha-9th

Avenue intersections. Also, the South Lake Union Design Guidelines identify South Lake Union Park as a 'Heart' location. In addition, the proposed streetcar route will run on Valley. Clearly, Valley Street is vital to the community's identity as a vibrant pedestrian neighborhood.

### Pedestrian Priority 2

Corridors identified in this category should receive immediate attention, though the treatment suggested may not be as extensive as Pedestrian Priority 1. The streets chosen reflect a support system for the Pedestrian Priority 1. The Charlottesville, Virginia, study demonstrated the necessity to avoid pedestrian 'dead zones'. This level aims to spread pedestrian energy throughout the neighborhood, rather than constraining activity to isolated areas.

Street improvements include: landscaping (i.e. trees, planting strips, etc.), trash/recycle bins, pedestrian-level lighting, street furniture (i.e. bicycle racks, benches, etc.), brick mid-block and corner crossings, and brick accented sidewalks.

### *Denny Park Area (Dexter Avenue North, 9th Avenue North, John Street)*

The area identified for improvements surrounds Denny Park, thus pedestrian accessibility to the park will increase. Additionally, the improved pathways support usage of the Denny Way proposed improvements (see above).



*Looking North along 8th from John*



The Parks Department has designated a portion of the proposed improvement area as requiring ‘Street Improvements’ (see Map 4: SLU Neighborhood Plan & Parks Department). Also, the South Lake Union Design Guidelines declare Denny Park a ‘Heart’ location (see Map 2: SLU Design Guidelines). Therefore the surrounding streets should be given attention. While pedestrian improvements are encouraged on Dexter Avenue North, the presence of the neighborhood’s only bicycle lane should be recognized. Pedestrian improvements should not impede on bicycle usage.



*Looking West along John*

#### *Harrison Street*

This corridor runs parallel to Thomas Street (Map 5), complementing it. Improvements to Harrison Street support existing housing units along the eastern parts of the community. Also, a proposed street car stop on Terry Avenue North (between Harrison Street and Republican Street) would be well served by pedestrian amenities and street improvements along Harrison Street.



*Harrison Street, looking west from Fairview*

The Parks Department has designated a portion of Harrison Street as a ‘Designated Green Street’ (see Map 4: SLU Neighborhood Plan & Parks Department). Also, the South Lake

Union Design Guidelines declare Harrison Street a ‘Heart’ location (see Map 2: SLU Design Guidelines).

#### *Thomas Street (Between Pontius and Eastlake)*

This section of Thomas Street would serve to support existing housing as well as the Thomas Street designation (see Pedestrian Priority1: Thomas Street).

#### *9th Avenue North (between Roy and Aloha Streets) and Aloha Street (between 9th Avenue North and 8th Avenue North)*

The proposed street improvements would facilitate access to retail locations along 9th Avenue and the access to the waterfront, South Lake Union Park, and potential park land on 8th Avenue (possible future use).

The Aloha Street-9th Avenue North intersection is a designated ‘Gateway’ (see Map 2: SLU Design Guidelines). Another contributing factor to the importance of said street improvements is the high speed traffic from the north along Westlake. Pedestrian street improvements can create a sense of arrival and pedestrian safety on this auto-dominated stretch.

#### Pedestrian Priority 3

Pathways in this class should be deemed relevant to neighborhood connectivity. Existing conditions present opportunities to further pedestrian usage on these streets. Street improvements include: landscaping (i.e. trees, planting strips, etc.), trash/recycle bins, street furniture (i.e. bicycle racks, benches, etc.), pedestrian-level lighting, and brick accented mid-block and corner crossings.

#### *Dexter Avenue North*

The Parks Department has designated a portion of the proposed improvement area as requiring ‘Street Improvements’ (see Map 4: SLU Neighborhood Plan & Parks Department). Also, the South Lake Union Design Guidelines declare the Mercer-Dexter intersection a ‘Gateway location’ (see Map 2: SLU Design Guidelines). While pedestrian improvement is encouraged on Dexter Avenue, the presence of the neighborhood’s only bicycle lane should be recognized. Pedestrian improvements should not impede on bicycle usage.

#### Pedestrian Priority 4

Corridors identified in this category are important as support systems for the existing community and its future growth. Additionally, they tie together designations made in previous sections (i.e. Pedestrian Priority 1, 2, and 3). Improvements should be pursued in these areas, particularly if construction projects allow for



redevelopment. Street improvements include: landscaping (i.e. trees, planting strips, etc.), trash/recycle bins, pedestrian-level lighting, and corner crossings.

#### *8th Avenue North*

The Mercer Corridor Project includes redeveloping and redesigning Broad Street, Valley Street, and Mercer Street. The project presents a good opportunity to create a pedestrian crossing on 8th Avenue North from Mercer Street to Roy Street.

#### *John Street (between 9th Avenue North and Westlake Avenue North)*

Supports the Denny Park area (see Pedestrian Priority 1 and Pedestrian Priority 2)

#### *Minor Avenue*

The South Lake Union Design Guidelines declare the Denny-Pontius intersection a 'Gateway' location (see Map 2: SLU Design Guidelines). Additionally, the path leads to existing housing units.

#### *Eastlake Avenue*

The pathway supports existing housing units. Also, beautification measures along Eastlake, which borders Interstate 5, are recommended.

#### *Mercer Street*

The pathway supports existing housing units. Also, beautification measures along Mercer, which borders the Interstate 5 ramp, are recommended.

## Denny Park

Much of this document has discussed activating street spaces by connecting existing nodes of activity. During the process of outlining corridors, it became apparent that one node, Denny Park, was currently underutilized but offered great potential as a sizable expanse of open space to be used by the burgeoning South Lake Union population. With this in mind, it was decided that analysis of existing conditions and recommendation of treatments for Denny Park was an issue that had to be addressed.

### Introduction

Denny Park is a five acre parcel of open space bordered by Dexter Avenue North to the West, John Street to the North, 9th Avenue North to the East, and Denny Way to the South. It has an understory of grass upon which sits an intense tree canopy of 43 different non-Northwest native species. It is framed by an X-

shaped intersecting concrete pathway and a double pronged concrete pathway running North-South. All pathways converge in the center of the Park. Built in 1948, the Parks Department Administration Building sits on the western edge of the Park.

Denny Park has historical significance as Seattle's first City Park. It lies on Pioneer David Denny's land claim, and was first donated to the City in 1864 as a cemetery.



*Aerial photo of Denny Park (Source: DPD GIS website, 1999 North Aerials: <<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/MapCenter/>>)*

Denny Park did not always look the way it does now. In 1883 the Dennys drew up a new deed dedicating most of the cemetery property to become a public park. Graves were relocated to Washelli Cemetery on Capitol Hill (site of current Volunteer Park). It came within Seattle City Limits in 1894 due to annexation, and by 1903, being in the midst of a residential area, it was re-landscaped with playfields, swings, teeter-totters, and a sand court. This was in addition to the fountains and pavilions which had been added a few years prior. Toward the completion of the Denny Regrade, the Park was rebuilt in 1932, taking on its current form.

### Current Conditions

Denny Park is an isolated plot of open space. As noted by the Parks Department itself, Denny Park is "not well used," and improving Denny Park is one of the

highest priority actions in the North Downtown Neighborhood Parks Plan.

The public perception may be that there is an undesirable element commandeering the park. While there is a form of blight that has moved into Denny Park, it must be emphasized that, by Jane Jacobs' logic, this element is not there because it displaced other users but simply because nobody else was using the space, thereby



*Successful open spaces are either surrounded by a diversity of uses or pull people to them via specialized uses. Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland does both.*

letting it sit empty. "Into it came what usually fills city vacuums – a form of blight." It lacks the proper mixture of uses in the surrounding area that give parks life through consistent use. Within a two block radius, the only residence is one single family home. Aside from this, there is no housing

in the immediate vicinity. As a hopeful indicator of the future, the Denny Park Apartments are currently under construction at the Southeast corner of Thomas Street and 8th Avenue North, and will provide fifty units of workforce housing. Additionally, Vulcan's plans to create an 8th Avenue residential district are very promising in terms of both bringing needed housing to the area, and in providing the district with users of open space.



*When a park is surrounded by a mix of residences, offices, and retail, it needs no special attraction to be well-used (Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia)*

Current uses ringing the Park consist mostly of office and light industrial. While employees of these businesses could be potential noon-time park users, fieldwork did not suggest this to be the case. The wide expanse of asphalt that separates the Park from businesses across both Denny Way and Dexter Avenue North suggests these users feel psychologically cut-off from the Park and therefore do not use it.



*Buildings across the street from Denny Park*

The design of Denny Park makes it a challenge to pull people in from the surrounding area. The thickness of the tree cover forms a barrier around the perimeter of the park, and creates visual inaccessibility by blocking sightlines into the park. Successful open space offers a natural segue between being in the park and out of it; at select entrances, it invites people in gradually, enticing them to enter in as they feel comfortable.



*Bryant Park in New York City before and after improvements were made to the main entrance. These huts are food kiosks. The interior of the park is now visible from the street (Source: Project for Public Spaces website, "Why Many Public Spaces Fail," [http://www.pps.org/topics/gps/failed\\_place\\_feat](http://www.pps.org/topics/gps/failed_place_feat))*



Trees should be used to provide a sense of enclosure rather than a rigid border. Often this entails separating open patches of space with clusters of trees to give people something to back up against. People do not like to sit with their backs exposed. Whenever possible, they prefer to back up against a tree, ledge, or other defining feature.



*Users of Denny Park*



*Many walk through, they just don't stop*

While Denny Park previously had some recreational uses, currently it has none. This is significant. Lacking the proper chemistry in the area for people to naturally stumble upon the space, parks must resort to specialized uses to draw users in from beyond the immediate vicinity. One of the most basic forms of recreation, sitting and taking in the sun, is a pastime enjoyed by many city office workers on lunchtime reprieve. However, it is not really possible to do this in Denny Park because the tree canopy is too thick and the trees are scattered in such a way that there is



*Vacant Benches*

not any significant expanse of grass that is exposed to the Sun for a meaningful length of time. Lastly, the Park lacks socially suitable space for sitting. There are park benches along the concrete pathways, but they were not being used during any of our visits. When people sat, they sat on the grass. Providing for such a space is one of the goals of the North Downtown Parks Plan.

### Remediation

It is recognized that Denny Park is an area of historical significance to the City of Seattle and its residents. However, in its current iteration Denny Park is not a success. The following measures propose to fix that through changes to both the surrounding area and to the Park itself. These suggestions borrow heavily from tenets put forth by well-respected authors in the planning field about what makes for successful open spaces, noted in Appendix A. It should be emphasized that these changes can be made for the benefit of the neighborhood while generally preserving the existing character and the heritage of Denny Park.



### *Add Housing*

The most important thing to do in the long term is to add housing to the area. The streets on the South and East side of Denny have good urban form and have much potential as the site of a residential district, consistent with the outline for Vulcan's 8th Ave residential district. Housing is starting to come to 8th Avenue North, with the Denny Park Apartments currently under construction. Additionally, several parcels on the perimeter of the park have buildings worth less than 40% of the land value, which speaks to the feasibility for developers to acquire these parcels for residential redevelopment. If land can be appropriately acquired, consider closing the block of John between 9th and Dexter to automobiles and developing housing to spill directly out onto the park on that side.



*First significant housing project in Denny Park area*



*On certain streets, housing should spill directly onto the sidewalk*

### *Turn Parks Administration Building into a Community Center*

In the 1998 South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan, neighborhood stakeholders expressed their desire to relocate the Parks Department Headquarters and adapt the existing structure for use as a neighborhood community center. This idea has since surfaced in the Parks Department's own North Downtown Park Plan. This idea is strongly supported as it would help the building better 'communicate' with the park. Ideally the design would provide pedestrian access through the building in the form of an open air passageway. This would offer a visual sightline from Dexter to the center of the park. There would be room for a counter sandwich café with open-air patio, which could be leased to a proprietor or run as a non-profit venture to educate youth interested in learning how to run a business. Properly located, this food plaza would also form a segue between the building and the open space, and would pull people into the park. Site reconnaissance suggested unmet demand for lunchtime locations, evidenced by lines out the door at several existing establishments, so having a food venture located within the park bears promise and further consideration.

### *Thin the tree cover and transplant some trees*

The tree cover needs to be thinned, and some of the trees should be transplanted and relocated to reduce scattering and concentrate trees in clusters. Ideally, some of the trees could be relocated onto surrounding streets designated Priority 1, as part of the pedestrian corridor designation. If transplantation is feasible, these already mature trees would provide immediate greenery to the surrounding concrete and asphalt dominated streetscape. Austrian Black Pine is the most common tree in the park, so perhaps some of these can be moved out of the park and onto streets designated for streetscape improvements. Arthur Lee Jacobsen, who has documented every tree in Denny Park, has noted of Austrian Black Pines that if these "specimens decline and perish they will be little missed."

### *Create a sunny spot with ledges suitable for sitting*

As noted, the trees provide too much coverage and enclosure. Up to 30% of the park area (1.5 acres) should be drenched in sunlight. This would be an open area with a variety of ledges that would function as places to sit. The grade of Denny Park lends itself well to creating a variety of sitting spaces that differ in height and orientation by simply building in level ledges that form various angles with the topography.



### *Incorporate recreational uses*

More immediately, recreational uses can and should be incorporated into the park, which will serve as a catalyst for change. Users of recreational space will inject life and stewardship into the park. There are all kinds of uses that can be introduced into the park, such as basketball courts, tennis courts, or a raised pavilion for political rallies and dramatic performances. Denny Playfield, located adjacent to Denny Park, provides the only space for active recreation in the North Downtown area, with a small soccer field and basketball court. However, this site is privately owned and will eventually be converted to commercial development.



*Recreational uses inject life into open spaces (Source: Project for Public Spaces website: [http://www.pps.org/topics/gps/failed\\_place\\_feat](http://www.pps.org/topics/gps/failed_place_feat))*

### *Farmer's Market*

Opening up a large expanse of Denny Park would allow for siting of a Farmer's Market. The idea of locating a Farmer's Market to South Lake Union is further discussed in the Community Identity Section. Because it is bordered by streets on all sides, Denny Park provides excellent access for vendors to set up booths. This type of activity would also serve as a good attraction to draw people into the park. The market could be tried out both on Tuesday afternoons and on Saturday mornings to see which time draws the best crowd.

### *Denny Playfield uses*

As noted, Denny Playfield is the only publicly-accessible facility that provides for active recreation in the North Downtown area. However, as it is privately owned, its future is uncertain. Transferring the basketball court and soccer field uses to Denny Park merits consideration. However, for something as large as a soccer field, Denny's grade poses problems. Tennis courts are another possibility.

### *Food Kiosk or Cafe*

William Whyte has said, "if you want to seed a place with activity, put out food. Food attracts people, which in turn attract more people." A café would complement

newly provided open space by giving users yet another reason to come to Denny Park; a place to sit and enjoy the sun and also to get a bite to eat.

### *Playground*

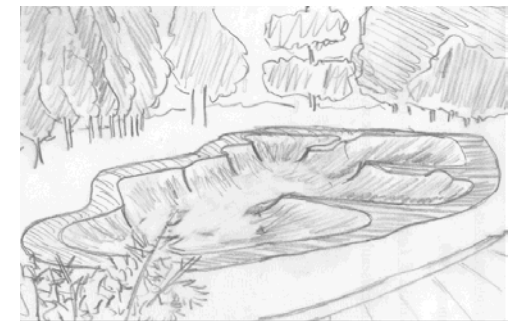
Based on site reconnaissance, the newly renovated Cascade Playground looks to be a big hit with the community and especially with children. It is doubtful that there is currently the needed amount of housing stock nearby to support an additional playground at Denny Park, but this idea should be part of a master plan for Denny Park in expectation of the burgeoning population. The walkability analysis presented in the Wayfinding and Connectivity section concluded that Playgrounds were among the features that encourage walkability.



*Kids enjoying a revitalized Cascade Playground*

### *Skate park*

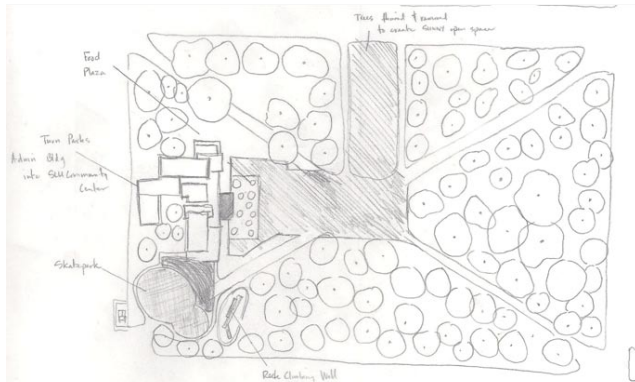
A skate park within Denny Park would be consistent with the Parks Department's Skateboard Parks Policy, which recognizes skateboarding as a "healthy and popular recreational activity and a legitimate use to be accommodated within the Parks System." At the same time, the policy seeks to locate skate parks at sites where noise impacts can be minimized, the skate park can be "part of a larger park space that provides other park amenities," and room can be provided for spectators to watch and enjoy. Denny Park's grading and location along two busy arterials make



*Rendering of a skatebowl in a park-like setting*



it a good place for sitting of a skate park. In addition, it is centrally located and well served by transit.



Iteration 1 of improved Denny Park, with Skatebowl



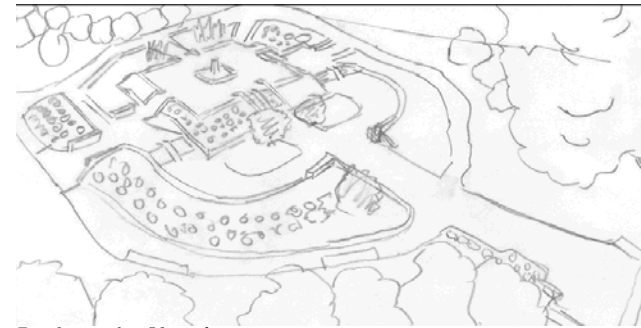
Photoshop rendering of Iteration 1 for Denny Park, with Skate area in southwest corner, near the busiest intersection to mitigate noise impacts. Siting of Open Plaza is intended to invite in eventual 8th Avenue District residents.

to replace that skate park as well as the recently demolished Ballard Bowl, and plans to add a third in Lower Woodland Park. Denny Park presents a great opportunity for the siting of one of these replacement parks.

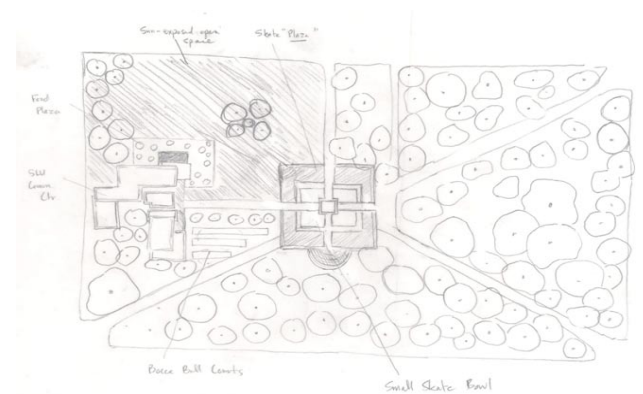
At a cost of approximately \$20-\$30 per square foot for poured concrete, skate parks are not incredibly expensive to construct. The cost for a 10,000 square foot park, from initial design through construction, is about \$250,000. In addition, there are various sources for grants to provide seed money for skate parks, including the Tony Hawk Foundation and Ronald McDonald Charities.

While recreational space for basketball, tennis, and soccer may be lacking within the neighborhood, areas for skateboarders are severely lacking city-wide. It is estimated that there are an equal number of soccer players and skateboarders in Seattle, about 20,000 for each sport. Soccer fans have 70 fields within the City to choose from, while skateboarders have only one city-sanctioned outlet for recreation, Sea-Sk8 in Seattle Center. Even this lone site will be torn down to make room for new headquarters of the Gates Foundation. The City has promised

Within Washington, the best source of funding is the Washington State Wildlife and Recreation Program. They awarded the City of Kent over \$500,000 to construct their third skate park, and recently awarded Seattle \$300,000 towards the Lower Woodland Park Skate Park.



Rendering of a Skateplaza



Iteration 2 of improved Denny Park, with Skateplaza

#### Other Uses

There is an almost endless list of potential specialized and recreational uses that can be injected into the park. Here is a quick laundry list: climbing wall, bocce ball, shuffleboard, ropes course, botanical society, public stage or podium for performances, fountains, P-patches, and game tables.





## Endnotes

1. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, Inc, 1961).
2. Christopher Alexander, et al, *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
3. Amazon.com book review
4. William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (New York: Project for Public Spaces, 2001).
5. See USGBC website for more information on LEED: <<http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/>>
6. Woonerf is a Dutch word which means “street for living.” It consists of common space shared by pedestrians, bicyclists, and low-speed motor vehicles. They are usually streets raised to the same grade as curbs and sidewalks. Vehicles are slowed by placing trees, planters, parking areas, and other obstacles in the street. Motorists are treated as the intruders and must travel at walking speed. This makes a street available for public use that is essentially only intended for local residents.
7. [http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/util/About\\_SPU/Drainage\\_&\\_Sewer\\_System/Natural\\_Drainage\\_Systems/Street\\_Edge\\_Alternatives/index.asp](http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/util/About_SPU/Drainage_&_Sewer_System/Natural_Drainage_Systems/Street_Edge_Alternatives/index.asp)
8. In person conversation with Caitlin Evans, May 20, 2005.
9. West Lake Union Improvement Project details available at <[www.cityofseattle.net/westlake](http://www.cityofseattle.net/westlake)>
10. Case-study available at [www.greatstreets.org](http://www.greatstreets.org)
11. Information available at [www.masscommute.com](http://www.masscommute.com), [www.cityofboston.gov](http://www.cityofboston.gov), and <[www.greatstreets.org](http://www.greatstreets.org)>
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16. Green Streets: Innovative Solutions for Stormwater and Stream Crossings. Metro; Portland, OR. Jun 2002.
17. Gabriel Scheer, *Sustainable Street Design: An Analysis of Best Practices as seen within the Seattle Context* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, University of Washington, Evans School of Public Affairs), June 2004, p. 36-39.
18. City of Vancouver, BC. Engineering Services: Environmentally Sustainable Options. Information available at [www.cityofvancouver.bc.ca/engsvcs/streets/design/enviro.htm](http://www.cityofvancouver.bc.ca/engsvcs/streets/design/enviro.htm)
19. Gabriel Scheer, *Sustainable Street Design: An Analysis of Best Practices as seen within the Seattle Context* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, University of Washington, Evans School of Public Affairs), June 2004, p. 34
20. Example available at City of Sante Fe Arts Commission [www.cominguptaller.org](http://www.cominguptaller.org)
21. It should be noted that while the Green streets designation has not been abandoned, it has been de-emphasized by the City. Why is not exactly clear, but perhaps it has something to do with confusion applied to the term being used prolifically to describe any number of treatments, from the simple addition of street trees all the way up to a Vine Street type of designation. Parks Department documents can be located at <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/>
22. Article on Denny Trees by Arthur Lee Jacobsen: <<http://www.arthurleej.com/a-DennyPark.html>>
23. Information on Park history taken from Denny Park webpage on Seattle Parks and Recreation website, available at <<http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/parkspaces/dennypark.htm>>
24. North Downtown Park Plan, pgs. 19, 44
25. *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, p. 97
26. *From A Pattern Language. Pattern 114, Hierarchy of Open Space.*
27. *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, p. 108
28. *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, p. 27
29. See Map 1, Buildable Lands Map
30. See SLU Neighborhood Plan, Section 6.
31. Article on Denny Trees by Arthur Lee Jacobsen: <<http://www.arthurleej.com/a-DennyPark.html>>
32. *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, p. 87
33. See City of Seattle Parks Department Skateboard Parks Policy. Available online at <<http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/Publications/skateboardPolicy.htm>>
34. See Feature Story in May 5th Stranger, “Shut Out,” by Amy Jenniges: <<http://www.thestranger.com/2005-05-05/feature.html>>
35. See Stranger Article. Also <[http://www.spausa.org/skatepark\\_costs.html](http://www.spausa.org/skatepark_costs.html)> puts \$20/sf for concrete at the high end of construction costs.
36. The Seattle region also has the know-how to construct great skate parks. It is home to a premier skate park design-build company in Seattle, Grindline ([www.grindline.com](http://www.grindline.com)). They have built over 50 skate parks around the world including several across the State of Washington. They know how to build well-designed parks that are popular with skaters, because they accommodate a range of skill and ability. Recently, they have begun constructing skate plazas, which incorporate more street elements into the design and may be more aesthetically appealing to non-skaters because they look and function



like a normal public plaza.

37. Project for Public Spaces, “Why Many Public Spaces Fail”
38. Ibid
39. Source: University of Washington, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Department of Urban Design and Planning, South Lake Union Studio, Spring 2005
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41. Ibid
42. Ibid
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## Appendix A

### Principles to be followed in Designing Pedestrian Pathways and Open Spaces



## From *A Pattern Language*, by Christopher Alexander

### Water

When natural bodies of water occur near human settlement, treat them with great respect. Always preserve a belt of common land immediately beside the water. Allow development to come right down to the water only at infrequent intervals. This may be no more than a simple stone promenade along the water's edge, or something much grander.

### Activity Nodes

Studies of human behavior make it clear that people seek out concentrations of other people, whenever they are available. To create these nodes, facilities must be grouped densely round very small public squares and all pedestrian movement in the community organized to pass thru these nodes. Major pedestrian paths should converge on this node, with minor paths funneling into the major ones, creating almost a star shape pattern. Squares can be small, like 40x60 feet (2400sf). Each subculture needs a center for its public life, a place where you can go to see and be seen. But promenades will not work unless pedestrian density is high enough. So it must be associated with places that in themselves attract people – clusters of eating places and shops. Any point which is more than 150 feet from a hub of activity becomes unsavory and unused. In every neighborhood and work community, make a piece of common land into an outdoor room – a partly enclosed space, with some roof, and columns, without walls, perhaps with a trellis; place it beside an important path and within view of many homes and workshops

### Road Crossing

Where paths cross roads, cars have power to frighten and subdue the people walking, even when the people walking have the legal ROW. This will happen whenever the path and the road are at the same level. If the pedestrian way crosses 6-12" above the roadway, and the roadway slopes up to it, this satisfies both requirements. To make the crossing even easier to see from a distance and to give weight to the pedestrian's right to be there, the path can be marked by a canopy at the edge of the road. A big wide road, with several lanes of heavy traffic can form an almost impenetrable barrier. In this case, you can solve the problem, at least partially, by creating islands, one in the middle. This makes it much easier to cross the road. So if you can't raise the crossings, at least create the islands, to use like stepping stones.

### Raised Walk

Raised pedestrian pathways provide a security for pedestrians vs. cars. The appropriate width is probably 12-30 feet. The Champs Ely sees sidewalks are 30' and are very comfortable, if not impractical for most areas. Less than 12', a



*Unbroken stretches of asphalt make crossing a street a challenge*

pedestrian begins to feel cramped and threatened by cars. A conventional sidewalk is usually 6' wide only. One way to afford the extra width needed to feel comfortable is to put a sidewalk along only one side of the road. This of course means there can only be shops along one side of the road [another way is to put a buffer in, typically street trees or parallel parked cars].

### Street Cafes

The street café provides a unique setting, special to cities: a place where people can sit lazily, legitimately, be on view, and watch the world go by. We know that people like mixing in promenades, parks, and squares. Street cafes give you the right to be there. It is a



*Even a small island helps break up the expanse of the street width*

place where you can sit and watch the city move by you, versus strolling where you move through the city. Properly located on a busy pathway, there will be much

to see in between sips of espresso or snippets of newspaper. It is often one of the only places where a newcomer can venture and start learning the ropes and meeting the people who have been there many years. This street café needs to push into the street, but be lightly separated by a barrier. Make the terrace of the café double as a place to wait for a bus or a streetcar. Identify it by using a canvas roof.

## Corner Grocery

Neighborhood stores are one of the two most important elements in people's perception of an area as a neighborhood. Apparently this is because local stores are an important destination for neighborhood walks. People go to them when they feel like a walk as well as for a carton of milk. As a generator of walks, then, they draw a residential area together and help to give it the quality of a neighborhood. At distances of around 4 blocks or more, people don't walk to the store, they drive. Thus it seems that from research, corner stores need to be 1200 feet or less from someone's home for them to use it. This corresponds perfectly with 1/4 mile goal of traditional neighborhood development.



## Pedestrian Street

The simple social intercourse created when people rub shoulder in public is one of the most essential kinds of social glue in society. To recreate the social intercourse of public movement, as far as possible, toe movement between rooms, offices, departments, buildings, must actually be outdoors, on sheltered walks, arcades, paths. Pedestrian streets do not have cars, but do have frequent crossings by streets with traffic. Deliveries and other activities which make it essential to bring cars and trucks onto the pedestrian street must be arranged at the early hours of the morning, when the streets are deserted.

## Southern-facing outdoors

People use open space if it is sunny, and do not use it if it isn't, in all but desert climates. North sides of parcels do not get sun like southern parcels. People prefer sunny to shady areas. Therefore, always place buildings to the north of the outdoor spaces that go with them, and keep the outdoor spaces to the south. Never leave a deep band of shade between the building and the sunny part of the outdoors.

## Pedestrian use of Public Space

At 150 square feet per person an area is lively. If there are more than 500 square feet per person, the area begins to feel dead. For any place where crowds are drawn together, estimate the mean number of people in the place at any given moment (P), and make the area of the place between 150P and 300P square feet.

## Stair Seats

Wherever there is action in a place, the spots which are the most inviting are those high enough to give people a vantage point and low enough to put them in action. This means that places which are slightly elevated must also be within easy reach of passers-by, hence on circulation paths, and thus directly accessible from below. Thus in any public place where people hang out, add a few steps at the edge where stairs come down or where there is a change of level. Make these raised areas immediately accessible from below, so that people may congregate and sit to watch the goings-on.

## From *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, by Jane Jacobs

### How to Achieve Diversity of use

To generate exuberant diversity in a city's streets and districts, 4 conditions are indispensable:

- The district must serve more than one primary function [SLU does not have much of but could]
- Most blocks must be short [SLU has]
- The district must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition, including a good proportion of old
- ones so that they vary in the economic yield they must produce. [SLU has but can it be preserved?]



- There must be a sufficiently dense concentration of people [SLU does not have...yet]

Of the 4 generators, mixtures of primary diversity and sufficient concentration of dwellings, are more difficult to create if they are lacking. The sensible thing is to begin where at least one of these two conditions already exists or can be fostered relatively easily. [problem for SLU]

## Prerequisites for street life

- Pedestrian life cannot exist in the absence of worthwhile destinations that are easily accessible on foot.
- Street space must not only BE safe, but also FEEL safe
- Street space must be comfortable
- Street space must be interesting

## Open Space

- p. 89: Parks are volatile places. They tend to run the extremes of popularity and unpopularity.....For every Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia or Boston Common, there are dozens of dispirited city vacuums called parks, eaten around with decay, little used, unloved.
- p. 90: In orthodox city planning, neighborhood open spaces are always venerated as a good thing, as a self-evident virtue.....but people do not use city open space just because it is there and because city planners or designers wish they would.
- p. 95: Unpopular parks are troubling not only because of the waste and missed opportunities they imply, but also because of their frequent negative effects. They have the same problems as streets without eyes, and their dangers spill over into the areas surrounding, so that streets along such parks become known as danger places too and are avoided.....Too much is expected of city parks. Far from transforming any essential quality in their surrounding, far from automatically uplifting their neighborhoods, neighborhood parks themselves are directly and drastically affected by the way the neighborhood acts upon them.
- p. 96: A mixture of uses of buildings directly produces for the park a mixture of users who enter and leave the park at different times. They use the park at different times from one another because their daily schedules differ. The park thus possesses an intricate sequence of uses and users.....(p. 97) In short, Rittenhouse Square is busy fairly continuously for the same basic reasons that a lively sidewalk is used

continuously; because of functional physical diversity among adjacent uses, and hence diversity among users and their schedules. One of Penn's other 4 congruent parks, Washington Square – the one that became a pervert park – affords an extreme contrast in this respect. Its rim is dominated by huge office buildings, and both this rim and its immediate hinterland lack any equivalent to the diversity of Rittenhouse Square – services, restaurants, cultural facilities.....Washington Square has had only one significant reservoir of potential local users; the office workers, who all operate on much the same time schedule, making the park a vacuum most of the day. Into it came what usually fills city vacuums – a form of blight. The perverts who took over did not drive out respectable users, they moved into an abandoned place and entrenched themselves.....It need not have been office work that depopulated this park. Any single, overwhelmingly dominant use imposing a limited schedule of users would have had a similar effect. The same basic situation occurs in parks where residence is the overwhelmingly dominant neighborhood use.

- p. 99: In cities, liveliness and variety attract more liveliness; deadness and monotony repel life. And this is a principle vital not only to the ways cities behave socially, but also to the ways they behave economically.
- p. 101: There is no point in bringing parks to where the people are, if in the process the reasons that the people are there are wiped out and the park substituted for them. This is one of the basic errors in housing projects and civic/cultural center design. Those that are successful never serve as barriers or as interruptions to the intricate functioning of the city around them. Rather, they help to knot together diverse surrounding functions by giving them a pleasant joint facility; in the process they add another appreciated element to the diversity and give something back to their surroundings.....only a genuine content of economic and social diversity, resulting in people with different schedules, has meaning to the part and the power to confer the boon of life upon it.
- p. 103: Parks intensely used in generalized public yard fashion tend to have 4 elements in their design which I shall call intricacy, centering, sun and enclosure.
- P. 108: If a generalized city park cannot be supported by uses arising from natural, nearby intense city diversity, it must convert from a generalized park to a specialized park. Magnificent views and handsome landscaping fail to operate as demand goods; maybe these should, but demonstrably they do not. They can work as adjuncts only. Conversely, swimming operates as a demand good. So does fishing. Sports fields do. So do carnivals, or carnival like activities.



- p. 111: In summation, the more successfully a city mingles everyday diversity of uses and users in with everyday streets, the more successfully, casually (and economically) its people thereby enliven and support well-located parks that can thus give back grace and delight to their neighborhoods instead of vacuity.

## From *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, by William Whyte

### Sitting Space

The first factor that defines why people sit in some places and not others is the Sun. But enclosure is probably the most important factor. Amount of total space is not that critical but the amount of sittable open space is. The best used plazas had considerably more sitting space than ones that weren't as popular. People tend to sit most where there are places to sit. Perhaps this is not such a revelation but considering how many public spaces are without it, it bears repeating – people sit where there is a place to sit. More important than aesthetically comfortable, the sitting area must be socially comfortable. This means choice. People must have options of sitting up front, in the shade, in the sun, in the center of action or removed from it.

Ledges and spaces two backsides deep seat more people comfortably than those that are not as deep. 36" is great. The zoning code Whyte's team drafted for NYC reflects this by stating that the developer gets credit for the linear feet on each side of the ledge if it is >30" wide. 24" is too narrow for two people to sit comfortable back to back and they will only do it in a pinch.

Steps work well because the range space provides an infinite number of possible groupings, and the excellent sightlines make virtually all the seats great for watching the theater of the street. Corners on steps are optimal because they allow people in groups to sit face to face. Steps also serve as a natural segue between the street and the plaza.

Benches are not as great as you might think. There are usually too few of them, they are too small, and they are usually isolated from where the action is. Where they are used it is best to make them portable and not fixed to concrete. If the placement turned out to be improper, they can be moved. One great thing about benches is that they have backrests. By similar logic, fixed individual seats are

not good either. Planners may balk at the supposed maintenance and vandalism opportunities in offering movable furniture. Paley Park's example counteracts this logic, as does the experience of the Metropolitan Museum of Art – it puts 200 chairs out and leaves them out 24/7, figuring that trusting people and replacing chairs when necessary is be cheaper than hauling them in and out every day.

The best used plazas offer 6-10% of total open space as sittable. Ideally, the amount of sittable space should equal the amount of perimeter linear feet. The zoning requirement settled on the compromise of 1 linear foot of sitting space for every 30 square feet of plaza. This is reasonable and builders have been meeting it with no trouble.

### People are attracted to other people

By far, what attracts people most is other people. Why is it that so many open spaces are designed as though the opposite were true? People really don't favor seclusion, they like to be involved, able to participate if they like, and some prefer to even be the center of attention. People often position themselves close to objects – a tree, a flagpole. They like well defined places, such as steps, or the border of a pool. What they rarely choose is the middle of a large space with no definition (22).

### Sun, Wind, Trees, and Water

Sun and southern exposure is of critical importance. Access to the sun should be protected, ideally by acquiring air rights of low rise buildings across the way, so they will stay low.

Places that have little or no sun because of a northern exposure or a large building shadow can borrow sunlight. Using building materials that reflect light in considerable amounts. Grace plaza, for example, gets no direct sun at all but benefits most of the afternoon from the light reflected by the southern exposure of the building to the north.

Warmth is just as important. People seek suntraps. The absence of wind and drafts are as critical for these as sun. In this respect, small parks, especially those enclosed on three sides, function well. Physically and psychologically they feel comfortable and this is one of the reasons why their relative carrying capacity is so high.

Most new urban spaces are either all outdoors or all indoors; more could be done to encourage in-betweens. With the use of glass canopies or small pavilions, semi



outdoor spaces could be created that would be usable in all but the worst weather. They would be particularly appropriate in rainy cities like Seattle.

## Food

If you want to seed a place with activity, put out food. Vendors have a good nose for public spaces that work. They have to. They flourish because they're servicing a demand not being met by the regular commercial establishment. Food attracts people who attract more people. The most basic facility is the snack bar. Paley and Greenacre parks both have pass-through counters featuring good food at reasonable prices, and making a moderate profit. From the street it sometimes looks like a party.

## The Street

The key space for a plaza is the street. The relationship to the street is critical. A good plaza starts at the street corner. If it's a busy corner, it has a brisk social life of its own. A key feature of the street is retailing – store windows. The area where the street and plaza or open spaces meet is a key to success or failure. Ideally the transition should be such that it's hard to tell where one ends and the other begins.

## Zoning Code

When drafting zoning code to encourage open spaces, many planners think specificity is too restrictive. This argument can be a persuasive one; leave it broad – “make the place sittable” – and leave details to be settled on a case by case basis. But ambiguity is a worse problem. Most incentive zoning ordinances are very, very specific as to what the developer gets. But they are mushy about what he is to give. Vague stipulations are unenforceable. What you do not explicitly prescribe, you do not get.

One piece of zoning that did not happen was the small park bonus. This would have meant that instead of building a plaza, a developer could get his additional floor space by providing a small Paley-type park on a side street nearby. It would have to be a good park, with plenty of seating, food facilities, trees, and the like. The developer would have to maintain it and post a performance bond. The small park bonus would have been a good deal for all concerned: the developer would get land at side street prices and multiply it into avenue floor space, the city would get a park at no cost, and this would be another amenity for the public.

Amenities have proved so demonstrably worthwhile as to pose a question. Is it necessary to give so much floor space bonus to get them? What has been increasingly troubling is the bulk of new buildings. They are bigger than the zoning had anticipated, but they are bigger because of the zoning. Taken one by one, the special floor area bonuses that have periodically been added to the zoning have made sense. The trouble is that builders have been combining them into a whole that the parts weren't meant to add up to. This fact is reflected in the market price of land, and as developers are quick to plead, this forces them to seek the maximum permissible bulk. Then there is the increasing use of air rights transfer. The basic idea is good and has been well applied to the protection of landmarks. But it does provide another upward push. By coming in every feasible bonus provision with a purchase of rights from a nearby site, the developer can put up a building with a FAR of up to 21.6, versus the nominal 15 originally stipulated.





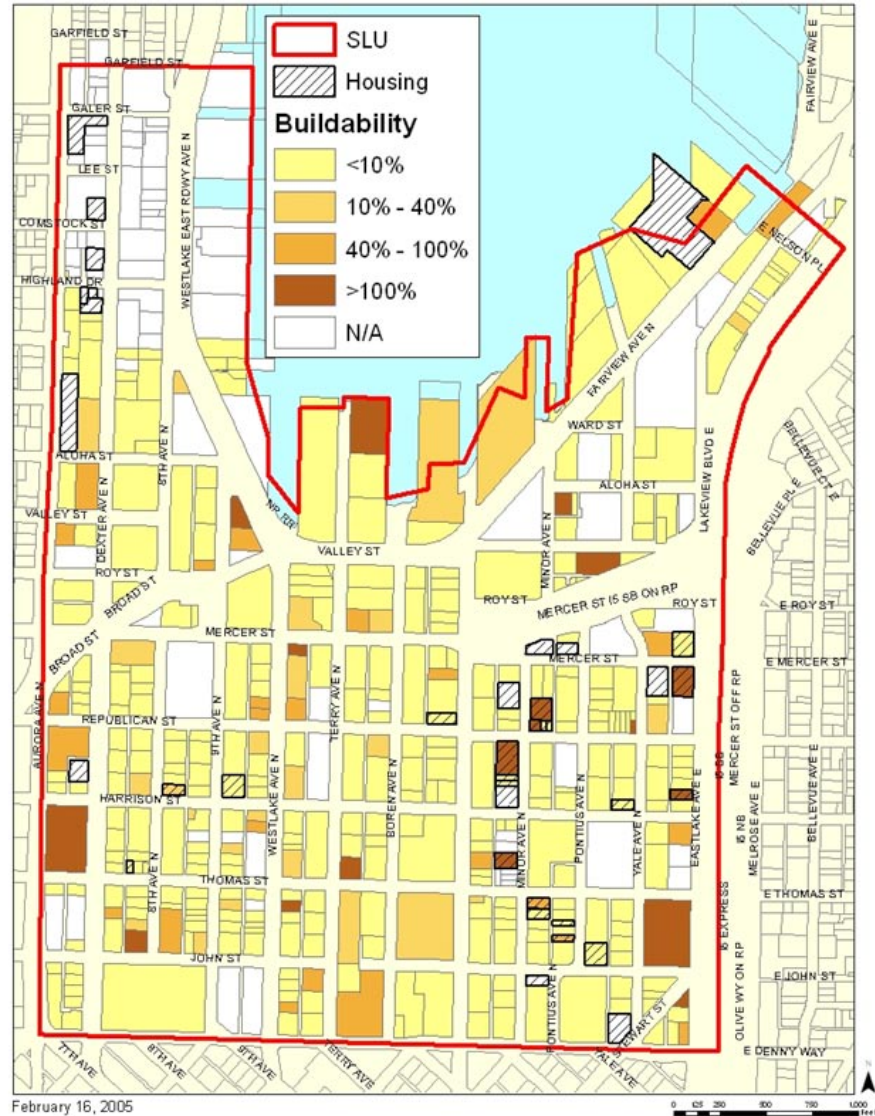
## Appendix B

### Maps and Renderings

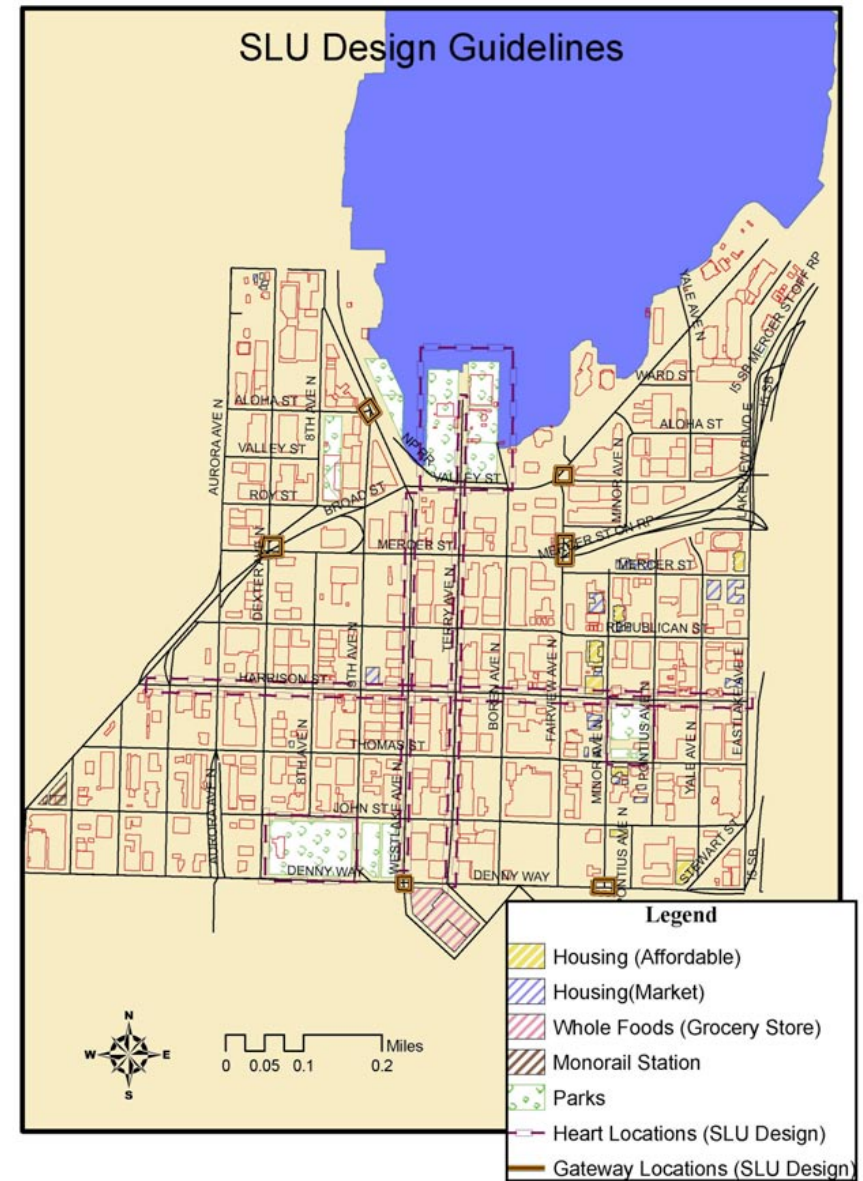


# Map 1: Buildable Lands

## South Lake Union - Buildable Lands



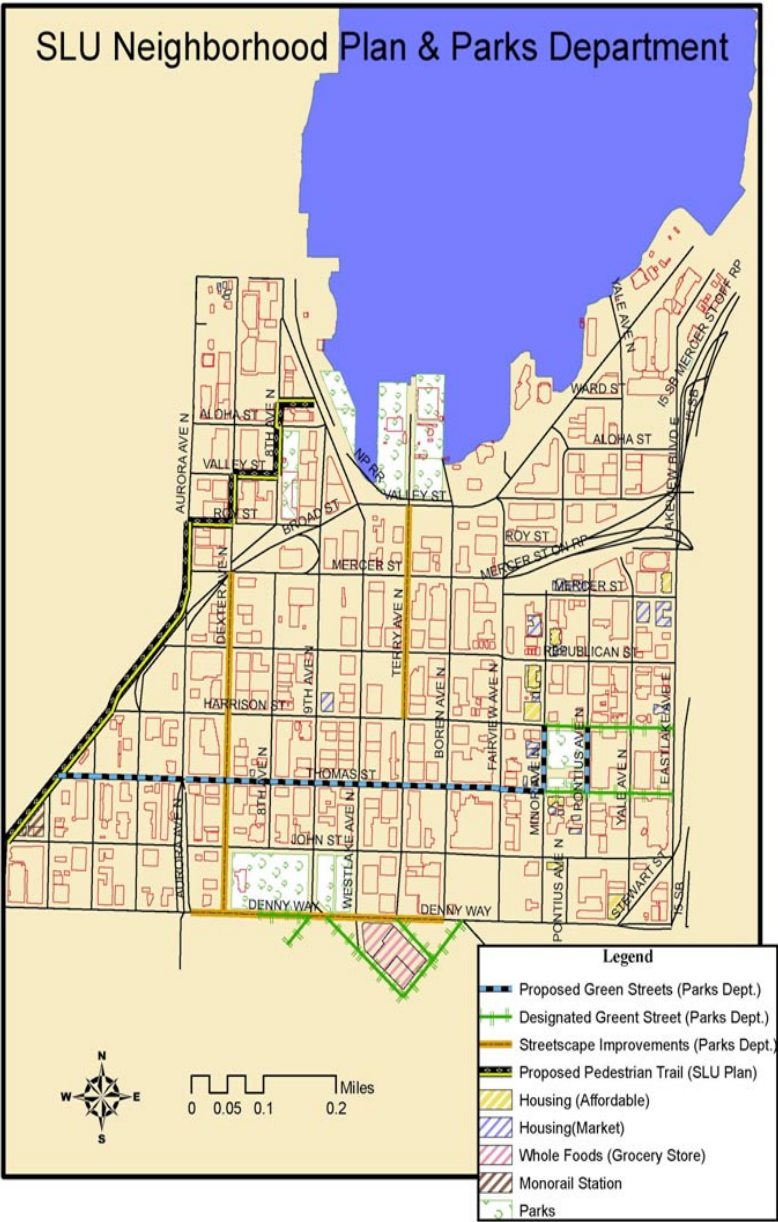
# Map 2: South Lake Union Design



Map 3: South Lake Union Existing/  
Developing Plans

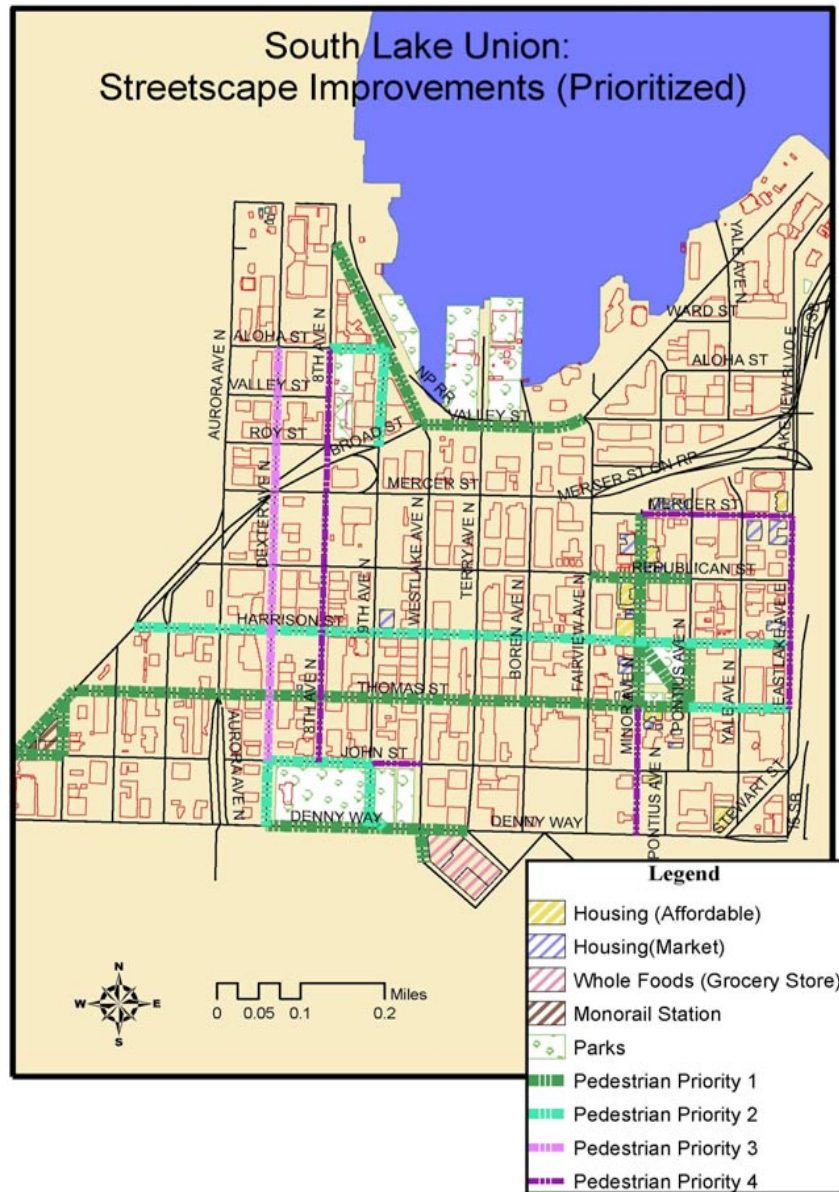


Map 4: South Lake Union Plan and  
Parks Department





## Map 5: South Lake Union Streetscape Improvements (Prioritized)



## Streetscape Renderings

